Indians in Jails in Gulf Countries

268. SHRI S. AUSTIN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indians languishing in the jails in Gulf countries, country-wise;

(b) whether Government secured the release of any of these persons during 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government for the early release of remaining persons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (d) The inforamtion is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Indians visited Israel

269. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state the number of Indians visited Israel and vice-versa since restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): About 12,900 Israelis visited India since the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. Information regarding number of Indians who visited Israel is not available since details of country-wise foreign visits by Indians are not maintained by Government.

Repatriation of Chakma Refugees

270. SHRI JAGIR SINGH DARD:

DR. SANJAYA SINH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Bangladesh Government has given any assurance to the Government of India to take back 56,000 Chakma refugees and for making necessary arrangements for their return in the near future; and

(b) If so, whether the issue has been resolved; the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government of Bangladesh is committed to take back all tribal Bangladeshi refugees from Chittagong Hill Tracts based upon available records of both sides and information furnished by the concerned village headmen.

It has assured that all measures would be undertaken to ensure safety and security of the refugees during and after their return to Bangladesh.

(b) No, Sir. The issue has not been resolved. The repatriation of Chakma and other tribal refugees did not commence as scheduled on June 9, 1993 since the refugees remain largly unconvinced of the suitability of conditions that await their return.

Repatriation of Bangladeshi Refugees

271. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Bangladesh have arrived at a decision for the repatriation of Bangladeshi refugees and that about 2500 refugees were to be repatriated per day from India;

(b) if so, whether the agreement between the two countries is being fulfilled, if so, the number of Bangladeshi refugees that have since returned to their home; and

(c) if answer to part (b) be in the negative, what are the difficulties in implementing the agrrieved at between the two countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Following

the visit of Bangladesh Minister for Communications to India from May 2—9, 1993 and discussions held in Delhi and Tripura, an understanding was reached between India and Bangladesh on the repatriation of Chakma and other tribal refugees to Bangladesh.

(b) Implementation of the agreement has not commenced.

(c) The main difficulty in implementing the agreement was that the refugees remained unconvinced about the assurances given by the Government of Bangladesh about their safety and security in Bangladesh and also about the rehabilitation package offered.

The refugee leaders maintained that unless the Government of Bangladesh conceded the 13-Point Memorandum submitted to Bangladesh Minister for Communications during his visit to Tripura from May 8—9, 1993, the refugees 'would' not go back. They also demanded that the Government of Bangladesh should sign a repatriation agreement with the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sangati Samiti (PCJSS), the apex political body of CHT tribals and called for involving UNHCR in the repatriation process.

Visit of Israel's Foreign Minister

272. SHRI N. GIRI PRASAD:
SHRI N. E. BALARAM:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Foreign Minister of Israel Mr. Shimao Pares paid a visit to India recently; and

(b) if so, the details of the discussion took place and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

The Foreign Minister of Israel Mr. Shimon Peres paid an official visit to India from May 17 to 19, 1993.

(b) Possibilities of cooperation in areas like agriculture, water management, solar energy, trade, tourism and culture were discussed. Views were also exchanged on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Three Agreements on Tourism, Culture, Siene and Tehnology, an MOU on Eonomic Cooperation, and Agreed Minutes for consultation between the Foreign Minisries of both Government were signed during the visit.

This was the first high political-level visit since the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel in January 1992. It made a good beginning for developing a mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries.

Missile Attack on Iran by USA

273. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that USA launched a savage-missile attack against the Command post of Iraqi intelligence service;

(b) If so, the details thereof; and

(c) What is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) In the early morning of June 27, 1993, the United States launched 23 Tomahawk Cruise missiles against the Head Quarters of Iraqi Intelligence Service. The attack also caused death of 8 civilians acording to Iraqi reports, and damage to property in the vicinity.

(c) An official statement was issued on June 28, 1993 expressing Government of India's stand on this issue. The statement is annexed.